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FRENTE REVOLUCIONARIA DE TIMOR-LESTE INDEPENDENTE

(REVOLUTIONARY FRONT FOR AN INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR)

FRETILIN

Abílio Araújo answers to some questions posed by the Austrian Committee for East Timor.

1. Is it difficult for FRETILIN to get informations from East Timor?

A.A.: Nowadays, it is not so difficult as in the period of 1979/81 when FRETILIN was severely beaten by the Indonesian military forces. Since the reorganization of FRETILIN, in March/81, efforts were made in order to restore the communications between FRETILIN leadership in East Timor and the DFSE - the FRETILIN External Delegation. The full restoration of our communications took place in the end of 1982, and from then on, we were able to keep the network set up to channel the informations from East Timor to Lisbon.

I would like to give you a brief idea about the information coming from East Timor.

As you know, since East Timor was militarily invaded by Indonesia on December 7, 1975, the Indonesian authorities have imposed a strict information blockade on East Timor. The outside world only could wonder what the Indonesians had and still have to hide. In the period of 1975/78, FRETILIN forces in East Timor were operating a transceiver (Two-Way Radio communications) between East Timor and the Northen territory of Australia. The radio called "Radio Maubere" was the only way to counteract the Indonesian Propaganda. However, the radio was neutralized in the end of 1978 after the responsible of that equipment has surrendered to the enemy.

At present, our information comprises written Reports, Letters, captured Documents like military maps, military instructions given by the Indonesian High Command to its troops in East Timor, etc., etc., photos on the life in the FRETILIN' held areas, etc., etc.. Besides all this information that is collected by FRETILIN fighters, other type of information is being gathered

informations on Human Rights abuses, and economic and social situation of the population living in the ressetlement areas.

I can truly say that many FRETILIN cadres daily risk their lives to gather actual information about the situation in the country, and that some of them were imprisioned and even killed for these activities by the Indonesian authorities.

2. How do spread the news coming from East Timor?

A.A.: As you know, FRETILIN set up, in November, 1986, the Information Office of FRETILIN, (GIF), in Lisbon, whose main aim consists of making documents and other material (like photos, maps, cassettes, etc) received from East Timor into information that can be used by:

- the international press (newspapers, periodicals, radio, television, etc);
- the D.F.S.E. in support of our diplomatic activities;
- members of (inter)national institutions and fora, who devote (part of) their work to "the Question of East Timor";
- solidarity groups, which ever since the indonesian invasion of East Timor supported the struggle of the People of East Timor for our right of self-determination and independence;
- every person who supports this struggle, but doesn't belong to one of the categories mentioned above;
- the Timorese refugees living in Portugal, Australia and some African countries.

3. What are the problems of FRETILIN, when you try to inform the Press, the solidarity groups, etc.?

A. A.: Our biggest problem is the lack of material means to organize, to prepare and to send the information received. As a matter of fact, we need to pay someone to do this job, etc., etc..
On the other hand, I can easily say that the Portuguese Press and the Foreign correspondents of the International News Agencies and Newspapers based in Lisbon are concerned with the fate of the East Timorese People. Big Australian newspapers and American newspapers like "Washington Post", "New York Times", etc., have been publishing several articles based in the infor-

mations that their correspondents collect in Lisbon.

It happens that our GIF has been receiving an increasing demand of information from the journalists , and, frequently, our Office is visited by the NGO's and other concerned People to consult our archives, etc..

You can imagine that we even don't have a photocopy machine!!!

The idea that the press does prefer non-FRETILIN information is not valid, at least here, in Portugal. I say even more that our information is rather more considered by the Press as we are being accepted as a party directly involved in the conflict.

4. What could/should be done by the Solidarity Groups to support FRETILIN?

A. A.: At this stage,I consider as important:

. To lobby for the recognition of our rights to self-determination and Independence;

. To publicise about the human rights violations, in East Timor;

. To support politicaly the demands made by the Nationalist Convergence between UDT and FRETILIN;

. To lobby among the Funding Agencies in your countries, to support financially our struggle, particularly, our INFORMATION PROJECT, because it is also one of our major Rights, that is, the right to resist and to fight the injustice and Humiliation!

Lisbon, June 1988